DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 114 104 IR 002 734

AUTHOR Ball, Alice Dulany
TITLE The Role of the United States Book Exchange in the Nationwide Library and Information Services Network. National Program for Libraries and Information Services Related Paper No. 27.
INSTITUTION National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Washington, D. C.
PUB DATE May 75
NOTE 32p.; For related documents see ED 100 387-397; IR 002 728-734

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Books; *Federal Programs; Interlibrary Loans; *Library Cooperation; *Library Materials; Library Networks; *National Programs; Periodicals
IDENTIFIERS National Commission Libraries Information Science; *United States Book Exchange; USBE

ABSTRACT

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science's (NCLIS) nationwide information program is based in part on the sharing of resources. The United States Book Exchange (USBE) and its existing services may have a role in this program, since the USBE's major function is the preservation and maximum utilization of publications through maintaining and servicing a cooperatively developed clearinghouse for surplus library materials. Established in 1948, the USBE is a membership organization of U.S. and Canadian libraries, with services to foreign libraries provided by grants or fees. The exchange has also begun an interlibrary loan program, and has experimented with microform supply of certain kinds of materials and with brokerage of materials for libraries. Given its cooperative structure and the large scope of materials with which it deals, USBE may serve as a model for NCLIS program components, as a network component itself, or as a resource for several components. Special areas of expertise which might be useful to NCLIS are contact with foreign libraries, disaster aid to libraries, copyright problems, handling fee patterns, and interlibrary loan services. (LS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED114104

IR

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR LIBRARIES
AND INFORMATION SERVICES

RELATED PAPER
TWENTY SEVEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES BOOK EXCHANGE IN THE NATIONWIDE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES NETWORK

ALICE DULANY BALL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNITED STATES BOOK EXCHANGE, INC.

The nationwide library and information services network as proposed in the national program document is based, in part, on the sharing of resources. This paper describes the potential role of USBE in participating towards the achievement of this objective. It examines the purposes, development, and program of USBE and indicates where they impinge on the NCLIS national program document "Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals For Action."

MAY, 1975

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the NCLIS. Though related to the Commission's National Program, papers in this series are not an integral part of the National Program Document.

IR 002 734

The Role of USBE in the Nationwide Library and Information Services Network

Foreword

The publication by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science of the final draft of its National Program for Library and Information Services is of particular interest to the United States Book Exchange, Inc. (USBE.) USBE itself is an early and continuing example of library cooperation in the United States, and its work for 27 years has been in areas of concern in the NCLIS program.

USBE's reason for existence and its principal operation is the preservation and maximum utilization of publications - a basic element of information resources - through maintaining and servicing a cooperatively developed clearinghouse for library surpluses. In its quarter-century of service, USBE has received and handled forty-five million publications and by March 31, 1975, had distributed 12,061,598 to libraries in answer to specific requests.

In developing the clearinghouse operation, USBE has been and is now a free-standing, self-supporting, non-profit agency responsible to a cooperative membership for one principal program: the receipt and handling of surplus and duplicate publications, so that they are available to the maximum degree possible to all libraries on all levels of size and development.

It is from this point of view as a currently operating cooperative center for resource preservation and library enrichment that USBE welcomes the NCLIS program's aims to build the new national program on the best

available resources, to expand cooperative services, and to help develop useful programs in the private sector.

In the following pages, the analysis of USBE activities, historically and at the present, is given in sufficient detail to make clear their applicability to areas of concern in the development of the NCLIS program.

Introduction

The United States Book Exchange, Inc. is a non-profit, independent, self-supporting library service organization, which operates a clearinghouse for the receipt, organization, and redistribution of surplus and duplicate publications, largely periodicals and serials, but also including books, documents, and other library materials. Partners in the USBE complex include 1600 member libraries (1300 in the United States, 85 in Canada, and 215 in 50 other countries), which (at their own expense for shipping) deposit materials in the central warehouse, select materials from the refined clearinghouse collections for their own needs, and pay an annual membership fee, plus shipping charges and a handling fee for each publication they acquire.

In its present aspect, USBE can serve as an example of the type of activity envisioned by the national library program proposed by NCLIS: it represents a cooperative agreement on the part of libraries of all kinds and sizes (primarily in the United States but also including many foreign institutions) to pool, and make available for mutual benefit, library duplicates and other surplus publications which cannot be otherwise used or distributed by the original owning library,— a major library asset which would be wasted if USBE did not exist. In planning USBE, the founders devised a tool which would distribute

publications in the most efficient and economical way possible, refining the random incoming flow so that libraries could receive the maximum utility from the aggregate.

As the national library program of NCLIS is developed, the cooperatively-produced resource represented by the USBE stocks and processes should find its place; whether this will be as one component of a network of existing resources, or as a basic source for the needs of many components, or in some other mode, will depend on the way in which the national program develops. USBE will be able to meet any needs of the resource network with comparative facility, inasmuch as it is autonomous, with the single principal operation of handling publications for redistribution, and thus can be both flexible and unencumbered in adapting to the resource requirements of the library community which is at once its source and its reason for existence.

Organization

USBE was established in 1948 to be an operating agency which would make it possible for libraries to capitalize on their surplus publications by pooling them in a centralized location from which it would redistribute them according to the extent of libraries' needs and the time when such needs occurred.

The clearinghouse format chosen by the founders could be advantageously based on the existing structure of the American Book Center for War-Devastated Libraries, Inc., (ABC) which collected and distributed publications from American sources to distribution committees in many countries from 1946 to 1948. As heir to ABC, the new agency could take advantage of ABC's assets of extensive free space lent by the Library of Congress, a hundred thousand periodical issues left over from the war-aid program, some handling procedures developed in the bulk ABC distribution, and contact with a network of interested

libraries in the United States which had been donors in the relief work, as well as with groups of beneficiary libraries abroad.

Planners for USBE modified and added to the ABC base in order to adapt the operation to one of exchange rather than gifts, and one in which libraries would at all times receive publications in response to their specific requests rather than in general categories. The new exchange plus fee program began operations in 1949. Actual operations produced some early revisions in details of the program, but by 1950 there was an established set of operating standards which have prevailed, with some modifications in degree, to the present. These components include the following:

1. A clearinghouse operation which physically receives and handles the publications made available by member libraries (plus a number of non-member donors), classifies and arranges them, and makes their availability known to members.
2. Agreement by member libraries to send in, at their own expense, publications they deem valuable to libraries but which they themselves can not use nor otherwise distribute to their own advantage; agreement by these libraries to receive no money credit for their shipments, on the grounds that such advances would simply have to be collected back from the members in the form of higher handling fees.
3. Membership open to any library with a clientele (i.e. all but libraries of individual persons) without regard to size, type, or geographical location, the only qualifications being a library's interest in making its surplus publications available and its ability to pay

nominal handling fees, plus shipping costs, for any item it requested and received from USBE.

4. "Exchange" based on the principle that a library should send to USBE any publications it is able to send, after meeting its own individual and community needs; and that it should take from USBE anything it needs for which it is willing and able to pay at-cost handling fees; no numerical quid pro quo required.

5. USBE processing of materials received based on providing the best possible access for libraries with the least cost within USBE operations; included in this standard are maintenance of the absolute minimum of records (e.g. alphabetical location taking the place of periodical cataloging) flat handling fees based not on market value but on the type of publication involved (eliminating the necessity for costly pricing and accounting), and a requirement that all requests be firm orders so that the total operating cost can avoid the burden of the loss from returned shipments.

6. Distribution methods based on the fairest and most open methods possible, avoiding various burdens existing in other exchange distribution plans (and some commercial activities) because of library-to-library variations in geographical distance and staff size: requests from monthly lists sent to libraries announcing portions of the USBE stock available are handled on a revolving priority basis, whereas libraries with special needs can place requests outside the monthly USBE lists through their own want-lists or special requests.

7. Processing of requests through methods intended to effect maximum distribution of publications with the minimum expenditure of time within the cooperating library; e.g. through an automatic back-order system for requests not immediately filled.

8. Assuring the health of the collection and distribution flow by applying the principle of supply and demand: USBE stock accumulation is based on retrieving from the available publications those which libraries' requests (either by category or specific title) have indicated as needed currently or probably in demand within the predictable future.

9. Within the demands of the principle above, maintaining an unlimited coverage by subject and type, including the stocking of many publications otherwise unavailable because of their specialized interest or low original cost.

10. Maintaining the cooperative mode, and the ability to evolve according to changing library needs, through the dual controls of the demands of a using membership and the guidance of a Board of Directors chosen from the library and scholarly community.

Historical Notes

In the course of 27 years, the basic collection and distribution program of USBE has developed with the changing face of librarianship in general and the needs of USBE members in particular. The brief notes which follow cover those parts of USBE history which are particularly pertinent to the resource capability of the organization today.

The transition from the American Book Center to USBE was made possible by a graduated three-year operating grant from the Rockefeller

Foundation. During the first ten years of operation, the agency continued to use free space in the Library of Congress, plus two small outside rented warehouses. In 1958, as it finally outgrew the Library quarters, and LC's own need increased, USBE moved to entirely leased space at its present headquarters location in Washington. In 1969, continued growth inspired the leasing of a second smaller building. Over the years the staff increased from five on January 1, 1949, to 55 on the same day in 1975.

At the beginning, USBE library membership included a core of American institutions looking for a distribution outlet for their duplicates, and incidentally hoping to take advantage of the acquisitions opportunities offered, plus a rapidly increasing foreign membership which received USBE's major early emphasis in distributing the large inflow of publications. It became apparent by 1950 (the Korean war, continued world-wide economic problems) that the world situation would not soon permit libraries abroad to cleave to the original USBE plan of charging the same fees to all institutions at home and abroad. Fortunately, USBE was able to enlist financial help from a number of organizations to pay all or part of the costs for libraries in many areas.

The initial Rockefeller Foundation grant helped to begin to support the service to foreign libraries. Subsequent arrangements were all made on the basis that USBE would call on all donated funds on the basis of per-item fees, in the same pattern as those charged to individual libraries, so that both the accounting and the invoice copies sent to beneficiary libraries made the method of charging clear, and so that the supply-demand principle was upheld. Funds used in this pattern included several small grants from private foundations. The first U. S. government assistance came from the predecessor of USIA, which contracted with USBE in 1950 to screen and ship, in a long-term gift program,

publicly-donated publications intended for distribution from USIA posts abroad. USIA agreed as part of the contract activity that USBE could draw on funds to finance a portion of each handling fee charged for distribution to foreign libraries.

The largest support for this service came from a ten-year contractual arrangement with the Agency for International Development (beginning when it was designated the Foreign Operations Administration). From 1954 through 1973, this contract permitted USBE to bill AID for handling fees for distributing, to 1875 libraries throughout the world, two and a half million publications, each specifically requested from USBE stocks by the recipient institution. American librarians were proud of their share in this developmental program, through which publications worth a minimum of $6 million went to libraries abroad at a total government (i.e. taxpayers') expense of $1.5 million, and they expressed this pride in hundreds of letters to AID and USBE deploring the end of the contract in 1963.

After the close of USIA funding in 1959 and AID contracts in 1963, USBE initiated an annual membership fee for all participants. USBE continued to serve any foreign institutions able to pay the cost of the membership fee plus handling charges and shipping costs. The membership abroad dropped to 250 institutions, but has stayed around that figure ever since, including libraries which have adequate budgets and either direct access to dollars or a source of funds within the United States. One effect of the wide earlier membership remains: although the number of foreign libraries is between 225 and 250, this membership is widely spread over 50 countries outside of the United States and Canada.

With the end of the AID program USBE turned its concentration on services to "domestic" American and Canadian members. From 1964 to

1969 service to this user group was successful enough for USBE to expand into two buildings and to plan for increases in program activities aimed at increasing both the efficiency and the coverage of the distribution process. Unfortunately, the beginning of the recession and the lag in Federal financing for library programs caused a dangerous decline in the call for USBE distribution. USBE asked the Council on Library Resources, Inc., for a grant to assist continued operations and to finance a comprehensive survey to assess what USBE's future value to libraries might be. CLR undertook a brief survey at the end of 1970; libraries queried responded with a unanimous backing of USBE's distribution programs, and CLR was inspired to make a rare grant-in-aid for operating expenses, paying a little over 8% of USBE costs for a twelve-month period of 1971-72. Since the end of this grant, USBE has been able to continue operations without outside financial assistance, helped to some extent by an increase in requests from abroad as the dollar has been devalued.

Two internal factors have contributed to financial squeezes for USBE at several points in its history. The first lies in so strict a maintenance of the non-profit posture that major outside changes in the economy were more critical than they would have been for an organization with some financial reserve. USBE has made only seven major increases in its handling fee schedule in twenty-seven years, and these alterations were adopted only when critically necessary, in the interest of maintaining as low a cost as possible for the member libraries and as wide as possible a distribution to libraries with small budgets.

The second factor has to do with the change in the average cost of processing each individual publication. It is of course less expensive, on a per-item basis, to produce one periodical issue as part of a long file than to produce one issue in response to a request for that single issue alone. Originally, the average cost at USBE was low because of

the need of foreign libraries for complete journal files and whole libraries of books. During the period of the AID contract, the foreign program was in a real sense carrying the service program for U. S. libraries which often wanted single and scattered items. In the 60's, a new crop of college libraries in the United States and university expansion programs, both encouraged by U. S. government grants, replaced with their large-scale needs the flow to AID-supported foreign institutions.

While these changes were taking place, technological and sociological changes in librarianship in the United States were causing trends towards the use of microforms and towards cooperative library programs. Both of these were accelerated when U. S. government assistance for libraries rather abruptly dropped off, so that savings became necessary in costly space and in acquisitions budgets, and when the price of publications began an increase which became exponential with the growth in the number of titles published.

For USBE, these changes meant that although requests were increasing in number, the average size of the orders received decreased to the point where the USBE principle of charging a flat fee based only on the type of publication handled was no longer completely valid. After a detailed study by a Special Advisory Committee, the Board of Directors in 1967 instituted a new principle: the fees continued to be assessed as an average, but according to the kind of order (single-issue request as opposed to elements of larger orders) as well as according to the type of publication.

Another effect of the changing trends lies in the development of the materials sent to USBE by the depositing libraries. The flow of materials available from American libraries has risen greatly in numbers during the last ten years, from several pressures: first the large buying spree of the early 60's which produced many duplicates and

a decreased need by the library for publications offered by staff and faculty members, and then the necessity in less prosperous times for the reduction of holdings including retrospective files and the back files of discontinued titles; plus the pervasive influence of the great increase in the numbers of titles published. Shipments to USBE now also reflect two influences which will be growing: replacement of publications through microform, and cooperative arrangements made because of networking, consortia, and the increase in interlibrary loans.

These increases in shipments received occurred as USBE's total distribution to libraries was decreasing. As a result USBE developed a more stringent policy toward the receipt of publications from its members and donors. Libraries were asked whenever possible to send a list of titles available, so that USBE could accept those most immediately useful and save libraries the cost of sending titles which USBE already had in large supply, or which had proved to be uncalled for in the USBE distribution pattern. Libraries which could not arrange to list titles were still, in the original service pattern set up by USBE, allowed to send in their publications unsorted, but were asked to cleave to an assigned shipping date, so that USBE could handle the total flow without becoming backlogged.

The control of incoming material is, in fact, one of the most important factors in the cost of the USBE operation. Exchange depositors and donors send in materials without charge, which means that USBE regulations governing their contributions need to be tempered to the extent of their good will. Unlike a manufacturing concern, USBE cannot shut off the receipt of raw materials when production is low, and this means that the costs of handling the incoming material have to be borne, no matter what the outflow may be.

USBE has developed a number of modifications of and additions

to its basic distribution services over the years of its operation. The earliest of the improvements to the distribution activities was the addition of direct-request facilities to the program of access through USBE's listing of available publications. Now the using library can call on USBE resources through almost any medium it wishes to use: by requesting items made known on USBE's monthly offer lists; by making up want lists or requests for individual titles on forms provided by USBE, or using its own forms; by submitting copies of its own records, from hand-written gap lists to computer printouts; by telephoning or wiring for especially-needed items; and by visiting USBE and pulling wanted publications off the shelves.

Another service development which has increased steadily over the last twelve years is the circulation of special lists of publications which the difficulty of proper identification would preclude handling by USBE within the standard fees, but which are valuable enough for libraries to be willing to pay higher fees. Such publications include cumulative indexes of periodicals, unusual or esoteric out-of-print books, issues and volumes of discontinued periodicals, and other "odds and ends." In two areas, this specialized listing has resulted in permanent distribution programs: one involving books of Latin American imprint for the large community of U. S. libraries with a special interest in this area, and one for the distribution of government documents: federal, state, foreign and international. As an experiment now, in this general area of specially-priced items, USBE is offering microform duplicates and other non-print items.

The original purpose in any library's use of USBE is still the principal one: to acquire publications needed to build collections, fill gaps, or replace missing items. Over the years, libraries have developed other uses for USBE services: for example, as a source for

publications wanted by individual staff or faculty members, or for publications the library wants to use in filling needs of its exchange or interlibrary loan partners. From this latter, USBE has developed, in the last several months, a program whereby libraries can use USBE as a substitute for their own interlibrary loan needs, using the ALA form if they wish, and paying regular USBE handling fees for the privilege. The program is not extensive at this writing, but it has proved valuable for libraries which use it for several reasons: a 60% return for periodical requests, even though USBE has no published list of titles held and the requests are therefore random; the speed of USBE return for all orders, including an extra-fee 24-hour service at the option of the requesting library; and the fact that USBE fees, even including the $1 per title rush surcharge and the cost of first-class postage for the hard-copy results, are comparable with the loan fees now being charged by many issuing libraries. For libraries in cooperative systems which limit the number of requests or the titles on which requests can be made, USBE's unlimited access and wide collection provide an additional advantage.

In addition to the refinement of the distribution services basic to USBE operations, the agency has experimented with other services, in addition to or beyond the handling and distributing of publications sent in. At present, for example, there is a "brokerage" program which is still in a trial stage. Libraries interested in trying to sell longer files of journals to other libraries can advertise them in the USBE Newsletter. USBE monitors bids received and charges a fee both for publishing the offers and for effecting a successful transfer. In another example, USBE processes gap lists for the National Library of Medicine under a contract which would serve as a model for extended acquisitions services to other libraries. USBE has also edited computer printouts of holdings, or extended want lists, so that the library involved can receive the

maximum effective use of the opportunities represented by the USBE holdings.

In another area of modern library development, USBE is now working out a pattern of membership usage by groups of libraries—networks, consortia, or principal centers serving as resource nuclei—as the cooperative aspect of library activity grows. The most successful example so far, in the USBE membership, is the program of the Regional Medical Library in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which draws on USBE for materials needed not only in its central resource collection, but also as hard-copy holdings in the libraries to which it distributes publications and information.

Throughout the years, USBE's necessary constant watch on the developments in library needs has been fostered by the Board of Directors in its own actions, and by investigators and committees enlisted by the Board to make special studies and reports on actions advisable for continued transformation of the cooperative deposits of libraries into a constantly available, contemporary national resource. The latest in this series is a blue-ribbon Review Committee which is going over all previous recommendations with the plan of setting a new and definitive group of goals for the application to the emerging needs of librarianship and information service in general of the resources represented by USBE and by the cooperation of its member libraries.

One major result of a committee study and recommendations was the change in the corporate structure of USBE in 1971. During the preceding years, the USBE Corporation had included representatives from a slowly increasing number of library and scholarly organizations, numbering 21 by 1971. Officers and some Board members were drawn from the group of representatives, with other Board members being selected at large by a nominating committee, which presented a slate of one candidate for each office. The change in 1971, effective in 1972, was

broad. The group of sponsoring organizations was widened by invitation to include any national library organizations (from any country) which wished to join, plus international organizations and American state and regional associations. Each of these is entitled to one representative, with one vote for officers and Board and any other corporate matters. At present there are forty-seven sponsoring bodies, including 12 national U. S. associations plus the three national libraries, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Smithsonian Institution; one Canadian provincial, one regional U. S. and 13 U. S. State associations; and 14 national foreign and one international association.

To these the corporate revision added representatives from the 1600 paying member libraries, thus providing each of the participating institutions with a dual area of influence on USBE development: through the character and extent of their deposits into the USBE collection and their withdrawals from it; and now through their ability to participate in the running of the policy end of the organization. In the new pattern, officers and Board are elected from a slate of two candidates for each office, selected at large by a nominating committee and subject to additional nominations from the electorate. These developments have produced Boards which have tended to be more representative and more consistently active than their predecessors, which were limited not from lack of individual interest and enterprise but from the constraints of the old selection methods.

Present Status

In 1975, in USBE's 28th year, the combination of organizational intent and historical developments produces these details:

1. Legal status: a non-profit, educational and charitable, tax-exempt corporation under the laws of the District of Columbia.

2. Corporate arrangement: autonomous organization governed by officers and a Board of Directors elected by the members, including representatives from 1600 paying member libraries and 47 sponsoring library organizations.
3. Financial base: Payment by the member libraries for services rendered: including a $25 annual membership fee and handling fees assessed at the average cost of processing each type of order or publication, plus repayment of shipping costs. USBE also is open to contractual arrangements, and seeks grants, for pertinent service programs.
4. Physical plant: Two warehouse buildings in Northeast Washington, with a total of 35,000 square feet of space and twelve miles of shelving.
5. Staff: four administrative officers, ten supervisors, and 41 others in publications divisions, office, and receiving and shipping.
6. Stocks available for distribution: approximately four million publication items on hand at any one time, including 100,000 books and documents and 3,900,000 periodical issues in 35,000 titles; analysis of stocks shows these proportions:

   Published in the United States 65%, in other countries 35%.

   Subjects: health sciences 25%, other science and technology 35%, social science and humanities 30%, general and popular 10%.

   Date range: from beginning to 1975 for periodicals, with approximately 5% in 1974 issues; in-print books largely in last fifteen years, wider range for o.p. books and documents.

7. Distribution rate: in 1974 USBE distributed 444,059 publications in answer to 129,624 requests received; rate of success in filling requests averaged 30% overall, and up to 60% for periodical requests for single issues published from 1950-1974.

8. Speed of distribution: average of three weeks from list due date for requests from USBE lists, three weeks or less from date of receipt for requests otherwise placed, except for rush orders which are filled on a 24-hour basis.

9. Distribution process: Library members receive lists each month of portions of the periodical titles, books, documents, and other book and non-book materials available for distribution; requests received within a month of listing are processed on a revolving priority basis. Besides making requests from lists members may also request publications at their own instance and in the manner easiest for them to use, including want lists, order cards, order forms, personal selection, etc. They may make telephone requests for 24-hour service. All periodical requests from USBE lists, and other kinds of requests at the ordering library's option, may be left on automatic back order with USBE if not immediately available on first search. All requests are firm orders, nonreturnable for credit.

Certain areas of USBE's present status need to be considered in more depth and detail because of their particular applicability to the interests of the national library program envisioned by NCLIS.

USBE as a Cooperative Library Organization

As a pioneer among organizations formed for the express purpose of allowing library synergy to produce special benefits for the cooperating members, USBE is in the form of an autonomous clearinghouse dealing one-to-one with each member library, rather than a library network in the more modern sense. The primary cooperative element in the USBE membership involves the commitment of the participating libraries to enter into the expenditure of time and money to insure, by sending some portion of their surplus publications to a central redistribution center, that all other members can have an opportunity to acquire whatever they may need from the collected aggregate.

This willingness to cooperate in a way which will benefit other libraries within the USBE framework is important in a number of ways. In the first place, it is a habit of long standing, understood and accepted by using libraries, particularly in the United States, as a way of cooperating which is taught in library schools and forms a regular part of the activity in many libraries. This is more remarkable in that many of the requirements of USBE are alien to the methods of other suppliers of publications. Unlike direct exchanges or exchange networks, USBE requires that members pay a handling fee for each item they request and receive; unlike commercial dealers, USBE requires that all requests be firm orders and does not give credit for returned shipments. USBE asks members to send in deposits of publications at their own expense without receiving money credit. Although exceptions occur from time to time both to the understanding by an individual librarian of the USBE operating principles and to his willingness to use them, it is important that so many libraries are content with them year after year and that dissenting libraries are drawn in after they come to understand the reasons behind the methods used.

The composition of the USBE membership is another unique and important aspect of its cooperative character. In networks now developing in the United States, public and special libraries are just beginning to interact with academic libraries. The NCLIS report comments on the fact that federal libraries have not yet entered far into the cooperative effort. In USBE, however, the membership has been well-integrated for a quarter of a century. At the present time, the 1300 member libraries in the United States and Canada include 3 international, 110 federal and 26 state or provincial libraries, 389 other special libraries comprising 249 in profit-making corporations and 140 in non-profit agencies, 40 public libraries, and 719 academic libraries of which 210 belong to state-supported universities, 116 to private universities, 171 to private colleges, 63 to publicly supported colleges, 149 to specialized institutions or university medical or law libraries, 5 to junior colleges and 5 to high schools. In addition, there are 13 members which are cooperative library centers of various kinds and persuasions.

The legal ownership of USBE does not rest legally with this variegated group of libraries. The publications in the USBE warehouses belong to the operation, rather than to the libraries which sent them in. The libraries do, however, have the right of access to the stocks on demand; and they exercise control over its central functions in three ways: through their election of officers and members of the Board of Directors, through the character and bulk of the deposits of publications they send to USBE, and through the kind and quantity of their requests from the stocks.

Within these areas of influence, the USBE administration and Board have an autonomy which allows considerable flexibility in trying out new services, enlisting new members, and determining standards and limitations for the distribution process. At the same time, the

cooperative nature of the operation governs the Board and administrative staff in any program action. They can make any decision which in their estimation will serve the needs of all the member libraries, and will provide greater economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in serving them.

USBE has been able to serve libraries which are also members of other cooperative acquisition programs, thus providing some parallel with the modern spectrum of interlocking networks. There is a long history, for example, of dual membership by medical libraries in both USBE and the exchange program of the Medical Library Association. At the present time 180 of USBE's 1600 members are also enlisted in the 950-strong institutional membership of MLA, and thereby, by definition, users of MLA's system of centralized listing of medical publications available within the member libraries.

USBE Resources

The resources which USBE represents include not only the four million items in the stocks at any one time, but also a vast future potential from member libraries and others, plus the processes evolved at USBE to make the best utility of the largest possible proportion of the materials received.

The stocks accepted and held at USBE have been built up on the basis of accepting into the holdings those incoming materials which USBE experience indicates libraries need and can pay handling fees for. Within this very general principle, the results need to be carefully outlined for their particular future values to be understood.

There is, in the first place, no limitation to what USBE will receive and make available except the criterion of possible distribution for the cost of handling. USBE accepts, in other words, any type, date, or subject category of publication and any kinds of titles, for which library need has been demonstrated. This means that there is no title

or category of publications which is excluded because of subject, age, or original price, unless it is a general class, like foreign-language texts, which libraries have shown they have no interest in acquiring.

This policy means that USBE accepts from its members and that the USBE stocks include publications in a hundred languages in several alphabets, outside of the preponderant stocks of Roman-alphabet English-language materials. It means that USBE stocks and distributes publications in areas (like library science) where the predominant publications are originally sold at comparatively low prices, and which are thus not profitable for dealers to handle. It means that the subject coverage includes specialized areas as well as broad ones, and that the breadth of publications in each subject area ranges from the basic general materials to the most highly specialized.

The breadth and bulk of the deposits of publications make it possible for USBE to maintain these standards of operation. It is because of the variety and cooperation of the members that the collections offer the wealth and variety of acquisitions possibilities that they maintain from year to year. State and federal institutions which cannot sell surplus publications are joined by private libraries which have much left over after sales, to deposit with USBE a great bulk of material including the whole range of originally very costly titles, basic low-price items, long files going back to Vol. 1 No. 1 of many periodical titles, and books and documents of all kinds. Special libraries, information centers, and professional individuals contribute late journal issues in such quantity that USBE is at this writing able to supply more than 50% of all requests for single issues published in any country in 1974. Members in the United States send in many foreign periodicals and books which are surplus to their further needs, while foreign members contribute late issues from their countries' output. In addition to the million and a half publications received each year from member libraries, USBE benefits

from a group of donors including reviewers, professional individuals, publishers, and non-member libraries and information centers.

USBE's selection guide, which governs the titles and types of materials requested from lists of offers and selected from incoming materials, consists of one of the few publications records maintained: a historical record of materials requested by members. For periodicals the selection process can be mechanical. Titles which the records show have been requested from USBE lists or directly are retained in numbers appropriate to the number of requests; those not requested, or issues received in numbers in excess of the maximum needed, are discarded. New titles are kept for a test period, if they appear to be in categories of need. Books and documents require a somewhat more subjective treatment, but the principle is the same; if the USBE distribution experience shows the kind of publication (subject, date, category) to be in demand it is kept and listed. With both books and periodicals, materials on the shelves are constantly and progressively checked against the historical request record, and those no longer in demand are discarded.

As a result of the application of these methods, the USBE publications bank is kept constantly as current as possible with the needs of libraries. The refining process has changed the character of the holdings over the years, as new materials have come in and new kinds of needs have been manifested, with the probability that the stocks as a whole have gained by several hundred percent in value, while remaining at a level of about four million pieces.

Given the source of the USBE stocks, the question can be asked whether the development of the use of microforms and the growth of networking and other cooperative activities such as interlibrary loans will cut down on the flow to USBE and thus eventually drain the reservoir which is USBE of its fluid assets. The immediate picture from USBE's

knowledge is that there is a very large amount of additional material which USBE could call on, if it could be distributed within the USBE framework; this untapped material includes publications in institutions now sending selected shipments to USBE and in a great many libraries which send very little. As one observer commented, "USBE doesn't collect, it receives;" an active collection program, justified by increased distribution could easily double the material now being received by USBE from member libraries, and increase greatly the donations of non-members.

Maximum Utilization of Resources

The processes developed by USBE form an integral part of the resource represented by the organization, in that these methods have given libraries maximum accessibility to the available materials and the best possible return for each dollar they spend.

Control of and access to the millions of periodical issues is maintained, for example, through a shelf location system, which eliminates the necessity for cataloging, shelf listing, and inventory records. Accounting control is governed by a few standard fees, so that expensive evaluation processes and complex fiscal records are both unnecessary. Members are not required to maintain any balance between the numbers of publications they send in and the numbers they receive, so that there is no need for elaborate exchange accounts.

On the other hand, USBE tries as a matter of principle to make the use of its acquisition services as inexpensive as possible in internal costs for each member library. Libraries may use whatever order format is most economical for them to handle internally. USBE will hold on automatic back order the requests made by libraries using certain types of order forms, and will transfer their requests to these forms if they wish.

These and other special processes make it possible for libraries

to enjoy a combined economy: low-cost internal handling, and "purchase" fees at an average of 30% of the market cost. Combined with a 30% plus average of success in filling all kinds of requests, and a much higher percentage in vital areas such as late periodical issues, the USBE system has made it possible for libraries to stretch their budgets by acquiring a good proportion of their needs for a small cash outlay and without internal burdens. Libraries in comparatively depressed areas of the United States are able to acquire, without expensive searching materials they need which were surpluses in richer institutions. Both rich and poor libraries benefit from easy access at USBE to materials which may have been low cost or even free when originally distributed, but which for that very reason are now very difficult to find.

Special USBE Assets

In addition to the broad areas outlined above, there are several other facets of USBE programs and activities which are pertinent to the NCLIS national library program.

1. Contact with Libraries Abroad. The NCLIS Report comments that library networking should be international, that "Americans need access to foreign publications and information, and vice versa," and that U. S. libraries should take a leadership position in fostering this international interchange. During the period of the USBE/AID contract, USBE was in a spearhead position for the leadership which American libraries were then manifesting in aiding collection development abroad. Although the AID-supported distribution program has been discontinued for more than twelve years, USBE still maintains its contacts abroad. In addition to serving foreign libraries which can maintain membership, USBE still receives as a gesture of continued gratitude, exchange shipments from many who cannot afford even USBE's low membership costs.

One factor in the possible future cooperation of U. S. libraries

with institutions abroad is the absence in the United States of a national exchange center, as developed since World War II in many countries. In the United States, during the 50's and early 60's, the International Exchange Service at the Smithsonian Institution, the Gift and Exchange Division of the Library of Congress, and USBE combined, in their several functions, to serve as national centralization for interchange with foreign centers. At the present, no one institution or combination of agencies provides all of the services of a national exchange center, although USBE has the potentiality to resume its part of the national position if funds become available.

2. Disaster Aid to Libraries. The national library program of NCLIS does not have a specific recommendation for a service to aid libraries hit by physical disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and fires, although the provision of such service is implied in the general cooperative ideal of the proposed program. USBE has been able to be of rapid and effective aid to libraries whose collections have been damaged by natural disaster. USBE has also served under contract as a central recordkeeper for donations offered by other libraries as direct shipments to devastated institutions. Through centralization of this kind, carried on outside the overworked facilities of a recovering library, duplications and shipments of useless materials can be avoided.

It has been suggested that USBE would be an appropriate location for a national standby function, which could be activated when disasters occur, serving to save valuable time by coordinating donations and by providing immediate urgently needed replacements from USBE stocks.

It is possible that this machinery could also be used to aid libraries caught in non-physical disasters: e.g. the economic drought suffered by small college libraries in depressed areas in the United States.

3. Copyright Problems. The NCLIS Report recommends the

establishment of a national periodical bank, using the medical collection of the National Library of Medicine as an example, but comments that the copyright problem will need to be resolved before such a bank can be established on a wider scale.

USBE, in its distribution, has no problem with copyright because it handles only original hard copy. The USBE flow could be tapped immediately for the beginnings of a national periodical bank, for no more than the cost of USBE handling fees and of storing the accumulating files. The added cost of building to a shelved and immediately usable collection would be comparatively modest, using the USBE handling system.

4. Handling Fee Pattern. USBE's experience in assessing and collecting fees for services performed extends over a period of many years and has been subjected to careful and frequent scrutiny over this time. The resulting fee schedule could serve comparable networking activities as a model of an effective and accepted method of charging for services.

5. Interlibrary Loan Services. The increase of interlibrary loan services is cited by all planners as a necessary criterion in a system which can meet expanding information needs without an exponential growth in the size of individual libraries. USBE is conducting an experiment to test the possibility of providing a substitute for interlibrary loans of periodical material. Libraries cooperating in the trial ask for issues by means of interlibrary loan forms, which USBE handles exactly as it does regular requests for single issues, sending the hard copy and charging its regular fees. Libraries may return the issues to USBE if they elect to do so, or may either give the issue to the borrower or accession it in their own collections.

To date, USBE's success in filling these requests has been about 60%, although all requests have to be random, inasmuch as USBE publishes

no title holdings list. USBE is now seeking funds for a larger-scale intensive trial of this service. Aside from the immediate value to libraries of a rapid and effective additional service, USBE would like to be able to assess the value of its distribution as an input to a national periodical program when this becomes a reality, and also to be able to test methods of improving the holdings needed in such a program.

Plans for the Future

As a result of the rapid economic, technological, and sociological changes of the last few years, the newly constituted USBE Board of Directors has been examining possible futures for USBE in an increasingly urgent manner. As this paper is being written, the USBE Review Committee is preparing its recommendations, which it is hoped will give USBE a definitive set of guidelines for the development of its programs and resource management during the next few years. Although these recommendations are not yet in circulation, their general trend is known, and if they can be implemented, they will increase USBE's appositeness to the aims of the NCLIS national library program.

The committee will undoubtedly recommend that USBE change its practice in at least two areas where overconscientious savings have produced negative results. USBE will be urged to develop a reserve fund, which will make its financial base sounder and also give the agency a margin for experimentation in new areas of service. It will also be recommended that USBE make a considerable increase in its public relations spending, in order to raise its profile and attain additional recognition among librarians and information scientists of the resource which it represents.

There will also be recommendation that USBE proceed with investigation of its appropriate place in network activities in general, and in the development of a national periodical network in particular.

USBE will be further advised to experiment with linking its ability to distribute publications with online citation services, and to explore ways in which machine-readable record-keeping might enhance the speed and coverage of the distribution service.

Many of these and other suggestions which the Review Committee will make are concerned with areas of development which USBE has watched over the years, but which are now just reaching a period of sophistication where USBE could (with sufficient financial backing) apply them with realistic results to its present effective but non-automated processes.

Conclusion

USBE is a cooperative library activity in the private sector, with a reputation and expertise gained in more than a quarter century of refining and redistributing library surplus publications, so that more than twelve million of them have achieved maximum usefulness among the cooperative library membership which contributed to the central clearinghouse. It performs a unique service in its effective and economical method of assisting libraries in collection enrichment.

It appears inevitable that the cooperative interest of libraries which has supported USBE, and the clearinghouse operation itself, will become part of a national library program of which the cooperative management of resources forms a part. How and in what way USBE may be incorporated into a national program depends upon the rate and the avenues by which that program is developed.

Aspects of the USBE operation, such as the fee pattern and the processing methods, could serve as models for other units formed as part of a general national program. The psychology, as well as the methodology of the cooperative base of USBE, could be usefully studied for the benefit of other wide spread integrated networks.

Meanwhile USBE will continue its presently-operational status as a collection and distribution center. It is possible that national

development may find it most advantageous to call on USBE to serve as a source for input of publications for a national periodical bank, or for a whole network of resource centers. Such a role would be essentially the same as the present one, with a new focus on service to the national facility or a family of centers. In an arrangement of this sort, USBE could also relieve the centers of duplicates they might accumulate, for redistribution to individual libraries.

It is possible that the development of the national program might make it advisable to remodel USBE into a standing resource center on its own. If the Center for Research Libraries should become a regional center for the central part of the United States, for example, USBE might be developed into a center to concentrate on the eastern third of the nation, or even to act for the southeast portion alone, with its wealth of federal, academic, and special libraries. A development of this kind would require more changes in the USBE operation than the first, inasmuch as USBE would need to adapt from its present world-wide coverage, or set up a parallel operation; a permanent collection would need to be started; and the distribution service would need to adopt a photo-copy facility and other new processes. Nevertheless, the base for such a changed operation is clear in the USBE structure, and the modification would be comparatively easy and inexpensive to effect.

Added funds through legislation (or other means) would be required to make a revision of this kind possible. Funds developed through a legislative program could also help expand particular USBE services in their value and applicability to the national program, in such areas as the application of automation to the handling and distribution processes, the increase of the international flow of publications, building up the resources of libraries in disadvantaged libraries both at home and abroad, aid to the flow of interlibrary loan

data, and so on. USBE will itself continue to seek grants and contracts for such expanded activities, and will welcome the fruits of legislative support when the national library program can bring it about.

In the meantime, USBE will continue its unique basic operation on its present self-supporting basis. When the national library program is ready for USBE to take a formal place within the total program, USBE's operational flexibility and legal autonomy will make it relatively easy for the transition to be effected.